

# HIS PA'S ROMANCE

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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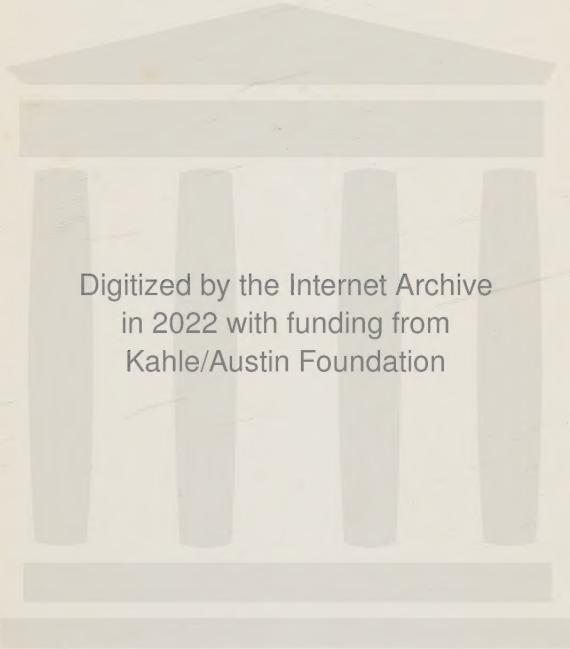
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JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



# *His Pa's Romance*

*James Whitcomb Riley*

With Illustrations by  
Will Vawter and a Portrait by  
John Cecil Clay

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*His Pa's Romance*



TO--

EDGAR WILSON NYE

*SUCH silence—after such glad merriment!*

*O prince of halest humor, wit and cheer;*

*Could you speak yet to us, I doubt not we  
Should catch your voice, still blithely eloquent  
Above all murmurings of sorrow here,  
Calling your love back to us laughingly.*



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*His Pa's Romance*



## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

ALL 'at I ever want to be  
Is ist to be a man like Pa  
When he wuz young an' married Ma!  
Uncle he telled us yisterdy  
Ist all about it then—'cause they,  
My Pa an' Ma, wuz bofe away  
To 'tend P'tracted Meetin', where  
My Pa an' Ma is allus there  
When all the big "Revivals" is,  
An' "Love-Feasts," too, an' "Class," an'  
    "Prayer,"  
An' when's "Comoonian Servicis."  
An', yes, an' Uncle said to not  
To never tell *them* nor let on  
Like we knowed now ist how they got  
First married. So—while they wuz gone—

### HIIS PA'S ROMANCE

Uncle he telled us ever'thing—  
'Bout how my Pa wuz ist a pore  
Farm-boy.—He says, I tell you *what*,  
Your Pa wuz pore! But neighbors they  
All liked him—all but one old man  
An' his old wife that folks all say  
Nobody liked, ner never can!  
Yes, sir! an' Uncle purt'-nigh swore  
About the mean old man an' way  
He treat' my Pa!—'cause he's a pore  
Farm-hand—but prouder 'an a king—  
An' ist work' on, he did, an' wore  
His old patched clo'es, ist anyway,  
So he saved up his wages—then  
He ist worked on an' saved some more,  
An' ist worked on, ist night an' day—  
Till, sir, he save' up nine or ten  
Er hunnerd dollars! But he keep  
All still about it, Uncle say—  
But he ist thinks—an' thinks a heap!  
Though what he wuz a-thinkin', Pa

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

He never tell' a soul but Ma—  
(Then, course, you know, he wuzn't Pa,  
An', course, you know, she wuzn't Ma—  
They wuz ist sweethearts, course you know) ;  
'Cause Ma wuz ist a girl, about  
Sixteen ; an' when my Pa he go  
A-courtin' her, her Pa an' Ma—  
The very first they find it out—  
Wuz maddest folks you ever saw !  
'Cause it wuz her old Ma an' Pa  
'At hate' my Pa, an' toss their head,  
An' ist raise Ned ! An' her Pa said  
He'd ruther see his daughter dead !  
An' said she's ist a child !—an' so  
Wuz Pa !—An' ef he wuz man-grown  
An' only man on earth below,  
His daughter shouldn't marry him  
Ef he's a king an' on his throne !  
Pa's chances then looked mighty slim  
Fer certain, Uncle said. But he—

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

He never told a soul but her  
What he wuz keepin' quiet fer.



Her folks ist lived a mile from where  
He lived at—an' they drove past there



## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

To git to town. An' ever' one  
An' all the neighbors they liked her  
An' showed it! But her folks—no, sir!—  
Nobody liked her parents none!  
An' so when they shet down, you know,  
On Pa—an' old man tell' him so—  
Pa ist went back to work, an' she  
Ist waited. An', sir! purty soon  
Her folks they thought he's turned his eye  
Some other way—'cause by-an'-by  
They heerd he'd *rented* the old place  
He worked on. An' one afternoon  
A neighbor, that had bust' a trace,  
He tell' the old man they wuz signs  
Around the old place that the young  
Man wuz a-fixin' up the old  
Log cabin some, an' he had brung  
New furnichur from town; an' told  
How th' old house 'uz whitewashed clean  
An' sweet—wiv mornin'-glory vines  
An' hollyhawks all 'round the door

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

An' winders—an' a bran'-new floor  
In th' old porch—an' wite-new green-  
An'-red pump in the old sweep-well!  
An', Uncle said, when he hear tell  
O' all them things, the old man he  
Ist grin' an' says, he "reckon' now  
Some gal, er widder anyhow,  
That silly boy he's coaxed at last  
To marry him!" he says, says-ee,  
"An' ef he has, 'so mote it be'!"  
Then went back to the house to tell  
His *wife* the news, as he went past  
The smokehouse, an' then went on in  
The kitchen, where his daughter she  
Wuz washin', to tell *her*, an' grin  
An' try to worry her a spell!  
The mean old thing! But Uncle said  
She ain't cry much—ist pull her old  
Sunbonnet forrerd on her head—  
So's old man he can't see her face  
At all! An' when he s'pose he scold'





## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

An' jaw enough, he ist clear' out  
An' think he's boss of all the place!

Then Uncle say, the first you know  
They's go' to be a Circus-show



In town; an' old man think he'll take  
His wife an' go. An' when she say  
To take their daughter, too, *she* shake  
Her head like she don't *want* to go;  
An' when he sees she wants to stay,

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

The old man takes her, anyway !  
An' so she went ! But Uncle he  
Said she looked mighty sweet that day,  
Though she wuz pale as she could be,  
A-speshully a-drivin' by  
Wite where her beau lived at, you know ;  
But out the corner of his eye  
The old man watch' her ; but she throw  
He pairsol 'round so she can't see  
The house at all ! An' then she hear  
Her Pa an' Ma a-talkin' low  
An' kindo' laughin'-like ; but she  
Ist set there in the seat behind,  
P'tendin' like she didn't mind.  
An', Uncle say, when they got past  
The young man's place, an' 'pearantly  
He wuzn't home, but off an' gone  
To town, the old man turned at last  
An' talked back to his daughter there,  
All pleasant-like, from then clean on  
Till they got into town, an' where

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

The Circus wuz, an' on inside  
O' that, an' through the crowd, on to



The very top seat in the tent  
Wite next the band—a-bangin' through  
A tune 'at bust his yeers in two!



## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

An' there the old man scrouged an' tried  
To make his wife set down, an' she  
A-yellin'! But ist what she meant  
He couldn't hear, ner couldn't see  
Till she turned 'round an' pinte. Then  
He turned an' looked—an' looked again! . .  
He ist saw neighbors ever'where—  
But, sir, *his daughter* wuzn't there!  
An', Uncle says, he even saw  
Her beau, you know, he hated so;  
An' he wuz with some other girl.  
An' then he heerd the Clown "Haw-haw!"  
An' saw the horses wheel an' whirl  
Around the ring, an' heerd the zipp  
O' the Ringmaster's long slim whip—  
But that whole Circus, Uncle said,  
Wuz all inside the old man's head!

An' Uncle said, he didn't find  
His daughter all that afternoon—  
An' her Ma says she'll lose her mind

Ef they don't find her purty soon!  
But, though they looked all day, an' stayed  
There fer the night p'formance—not  
No use at all!—they never laid  
Their eyes on her. An' then they got  
Their team out, an' the old man shook  
His fist at all the town, an' then  
Shook it up at the moon ag'in,  
An' said his time 'ud come, some day!  
An' jerked the lines an' driv away.

Uncle, he said, he 'spect, that night,  
The old man's madder yet when they  
Drive past the young man's place, an' hear  
A fiddle there, an' see a light  
Inside, an' shadders light an' gay  
A-dancin' 'crost the winder-blinds.  
An' some young chaps outside yelled, "Say!  
What 'pears to be the hurry—hey?"  
But the old man ist whipped the lines  
An' streaked past like a runaway!

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

An' now you'll be su'prised, I bet!—  
I hardly ain't quit laughin' yet  
When Uncle say, that jamboree  
An' dance an' all—w'y, that's a sign  
That any old man ort to see,  
As plain as 8 and 1 makes 9,  
That they's a weddin' wite inside  
That very house he's whippin' so  
To git apast—an', sir! the bride  
There's his own daughter! Yes, an' oh!  
She's my Ma now—an' young man she  
Got married, he's my Pa! Whoop-ee!  
But Uncle say to not laugh all  
The laughin' yet, but please save some  
To kindo' spice up what's to come!

Then Uncle say, about next day  
The neighbors they begin to call  
An' wish 'em well, an' say how glad  
An' proud an' tickled ever' way  
Their friends all is—an' how they had

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

The lovin' prayers of ever' one  
That had homes of their own! But none  
Said nothin' 'bout the home that she  
Had run away from! So she sighed  
Sometimes—an' wunst she purt'-nigh cried.

Well, Uncle say, her old Pa, he  
Ist like to died, he wuz so mad!  
An' her Ma, too! But by-an'-by  
They cool down some.

An', 'bout a week,  
She want to see her Ma so bad,  
She think she'll haf to go! An' so  
She coax him; an' he kiss her cheek  
An' say, Lord bless her, *course* they'll go!  
An', Uncle say, when they're hofe come  
A-knockin' there at her old home—  
W'y, first he know, the door it flew  
Open, all quick, an' she's jerked in,  
An', quicker still, the door's banged to  
An' locked: an' crosst the winder-sill

### THE PA'S ROMANCE

The old man pokes a shotgun through  
An' says to git! "You stold my child,"



He says; "an', now she's back, w'y you  
Clear out, this minute, er I'll kill

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

You! Yes, an' I 'ull kill her, too,  
Ef you don't go!" An' then, all wild,  
His young wife begs him please to go!  
An' so he turn' an' walk'—all slow  
An' pale as death, but awful still  
An' ca'm—back to the gate, an' on  
Into the road, where he had gone  
So many times alone, you know!  
An', Uncle say, a whipperwill  
Holler so lonesome, as he go  
On back to'rds home, he say he 'spec'  
He ist 'ud like to wring its neck!  
An' I ain't think he's goin' back  
All by hisse'f—but Uncle say  
That's what he does, an' it's a fac'!

An' 'pears-like he's gone back to stay—  
'Cause there he stick', ist thataway,  
An' don't go nowheres any more,  
Ner don't nobody ever see

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

Him set his foot outside the door—  
Till 'bout five days, a boy loped down  
The road, a-comin' past from town,  
An' he called to him from the gate,



An' sent the old man word: He's thought  
Things over now; an', while he hate  
To lose his wife, he think she ought  
To mind her Pa an' Ma an' do



Whatever *they* advise her to.  
An' sends word, too, to come an' git  
Her new things an' the furnichur  
That he had special' bought fer her—  
'Cause, now that they wuz goin' to quit,  
She's free to ist have all of it;—  
So, fer his love fer her, he say  
To come an' git it, wite away.  
An' spang! that very afternoon,  
Here come her Ma—ist 'bout as soon  
As old man could hitch up an' tell  
Her "hurry back!" An' 'bout as quick  
As she's drove there to where my Pa—  
I mean to where her son-in-law—  
Lives at, he meets her at the door  
All smilin', though he's awful pale  
An' trimbly—like he's ist been sick;  
He take her in the house—an', 'fore  
She knows it, they's a cellar-door  
Shet on her, an' she hears the click

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

Of a' old rusty padlock ! Then,  
Uncle, he say, she kindo' stands  
An' thinks—an' thinks—an' thinks ag'in—  
An' maybe thinks of her own child  
Locked up—like her ! An' Uncle smiled,  
An' I ist laughed an' clapped my hands !



An' there she stayed ! An' she can cry  
Ist all she want ! an' yell an' kick  
To ist her heart's content ! an' try

To pry out wiv a quiltin'-stick!  
 But Uncle say he guess at last  
 She 'bout give up, an' holler' through  
 The door-crack fer to please to be  
 So kind an' good as send an' tell  
 The old man, like she want him to,  
 To come, 'fore night, an' set her free,  
 Er—they wuz rats down there! An' yell  
 She did, till, Uncle say, it saured  
 The morning's milk in the back yard!  
 But all the answer reached her, where  
 She's skeerd so in the dark down there,  
 Wuz ist a mutterin' that she heard—  
 "I've sent him word!—I've sent him word!"  
 An' shore enough, as Uncle say,  
 He *has* "sent word!"

Well, it's plum night

An' all the house is shet up tight—  
 Only one winder 'bout half-way  
 Raised up, you know; an' ain't no light  
 Inside the whole house, Uncle say.

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

Then, first you know, there where the team  
Stands hitched yet, there the old man  
stands—

A' old tin lantern in his hands  
An' monkey-wrench; an' he don't seem  
To make things out, a-standin' there.  
He comes on to the gate an' feels  
An' fumbles fer the latch—then hears  
A voice that chills him to the heels—  
"You halt! an' stand right where you air!"  
Then, sir! my—my—his son-in-law,  
There at the winder wiv his gun,  
He tell the old man what he's done:  
"You hold *my* wife a prisoner—  
An' *your* wife, drat ye! I've got *her*!  
An' now, sir," Uncle say he say,  
"You ist turn round an' climb wite in  
That wagon, an' drive home ag'in  
An' bring my wife back wite away,  
An' we'll trade then—an' not before  
Will I unlock my cellar-door—

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

Not fer your wife's sake ner your own,  
But *my* wife's sake—an' her's alone!"



An', Uncle say, it don't sound like  
It's so, but yet it is!—He say,

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

From wite then, somepin' seem' to strike  
The old man's funny-bone some way ;  
An', minute more, that team o' his  
Went tearin' down the road k'whiz !  
An' in the same two-forty style  
Come whizzin' back ! An' oh, that-air  
Sweet girl a-cryin' all the while,  
Thinkin' about her Ma there, shet  
In her own daughter's cellar, where  
Ist week or so *she's* kep' house there,  
She hadn't time to clean it yet !  
So when her Pa an' her they git  
There—an' the young man grab' an' kiss  
An' hug her, till she make him quit  
An' ask him where her mother is.,  
An' then he smile' an' try to not ;  
Then slow-like find th' old padlock key,  
An' blow a' oat-hull out of it,  
An' then stoop down there where he's got  
Her Ma locked up so keerfully—  
An' where, wite there, he say he thought

## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

It ort to been *the old man*—though  
Uncle, he say, he reckon not—  
When out she bounced, all tickled so  
To taste fresh air ag'in an' find  
Her folks wunst more, an' grab' her child  
An' cry an' laugh, an' even go  
An' hug the old man; an' he wind



## HIS PA'S ROMANCE

Her in his arms, an' laugh, an' pat  
Her back, an' say he's riconciled,  
In such a happy scene as that,  
To swop his daughter for her Ma,  
An' have so smart a son-in-law  
As *they* had! "Yes, an' he's my Pa!"  
I laugh' an' yell', "Hooray-hooraw!"





## TWILIGHT STORIES

NEITHER *daylight, starlight, moonlight,*  
*But a sad-sweet term of some light*  
*By the saintly name of Twilight.*

The Grandma Twilight Stories!—Still,  
A childish listener, I hear  
The katydid and whippoorwill,  
In deepening atmosphere

TWILIGHT STORIES

Of velvet dusk, blent with the low  
Soft music of the voice that sings  
And tells me tales of long ago  
And old enchanted things. . . .

*While far fails the last dim daylight,  
And the fireflies in the Twilight  
Drift about like flakes of starlight.*

## ALMOST BEYOND ENDURANCE

I AIN'T a-goin' to cry no more, no more!

I'm got ear-ache, an' Ma can't make

It quit a-tall;

An' Carlo bite my rubber-ball

An' puncture it; an' Sis she take

An' poke' my knife down through the stable-floor

An' loozed it—blame it all!

But I ain't goin' to cry no more, no more!

An' Aunt Mame *wrote* she's comin', an' she  
*can't*—

Folks is come *there*!—An' I don't care

She *is* my Aunt!

An' my eyes stings; an' I'm

Ist coughin' all the time,

ALMOST BEYOND ENDURANCE

An' hurts me so, an' where my side's so sore  
Grampa felt where, an' he  
Says "Mayby it's *pleurasy*!"  
But I ain't goin' to cry no more, no more!



An' I clumbed up an' nen falled off the fence,  
An' Herbert he ist laugh at me!  
An' my fi'-cents

ALMOST BEYOND ENDURANCE

It sticked in my tin bank, an' I ist tore  
Purt'-nigh my thumbnail off, a-tryin' to git  
It out—nen *smash* it!—An' it's in there yit!  
But I ain't goin' to cry no more, no more!

*Oo!* I'm so wickud!—An' my breath's so *hot*—  
Ist like I run an' don't res' none  
But ist run on when I ought to not;  
Yes, an' my chin  
An' lips 's all warpy, an' teeth's so fast,  
An' 's a place in my throat I can't swaller  
past—  
An' they all hurt so!—  
An' oh, my-oh!  
I'm a-startin' ag'in—  
I'm a-startin' ag'in, but I *won't*, fer shore!—  
*I ist ain't goin' to cry no more, no more!*

## A SIMPLE RECIPE

To be a wholly worthy man,  
As you, my boy, would like to be,—  
This is to show you how you can—  
This simple recipe:—

Be honest—both in word and act,  
Be strictly truthful through and through :  
Fact cannot fail.—You stick to fact,  
And fact will stick to you.  
Be clean—outside and in, and sweep  
Both hearth and heart and hold them bright :  
Wear snowy linen—aye, and keep  
Your conscience snowy-white.

Do right, your utmost—good *must* come  
To you who do your level best—  
Your very hopes will help you some,  
And work will do the rest.

## THE LISPER

ELSIE MINGUS *lisps*, she does!  
She lives wite acrosst from us  
In Miz. Ayers'uz house 'at she  
Rents part to the Mingusuz.—  
Yes, an' Elsie plays wiv me.



Elsie lisps so, she can't say  
Her own name, ist *anyway*!—

## THE LISPER

She says "*Elthy*"—like they wuz  
Feathers on her words, an' they  
Ist stick on her tongue like fuzz.

*My!* she 's *purty*, though!—An' when  
She *lisps*, w'y, she 's *purty nen!*

When she telled me, wunst, her doll  
Wuz so "thweet," an' I p'ten'

*I* lisp too,—she laugh'—'at 's all!—

*She* don't never git mad none—

'Cause she know I'm ist in fun.—

Elsie she ain't one bit sp'iled.—

Of all childerns—ever' one—

She's the *ladylikest* child!—

My Ma *say* she is! One time

Elsie start to say the rhyme,

"Thing a thong o' thixpenth"—*Whee!*

I ist *yell!* An' Ma say I'm

Unpolite as I can be!





## THE LISPER

Wunst I went wiv Ma to call  
On Elsie's Ma, an' eat an' all;  
An' nen Elsie, when we've et,  
An' we 're playin' in the hall,  
Elsie say: It 's etikett

Fer young gentlemens, like me,  
Eatin' when they 's *company*,  
Not to never ever crowd  
Down their food, ner "thip their tea  
Ner thup thoop so awful loud!"



## OUR BETSY

Us childern 's all so lonesome,  
We hardly want to *play*  
Or skip or swing or anything,—  
'Cause Betsy she's away!

She's gone to see her people  
At her old home.—But then—  
Oh! every child 'll jist be wild  
When she's back here again!

### CHORUS

*Then it 's whoopty-doopty dooden!—  
Whoopty-dooden then!  
Oh! it 's whoopty-doopty dooden,  
When Betsy 's back again!*

OUR BETSY

She's like a mother to us,  
And like a sister, too—  
Oh! she's as sweet as things to eat  
When all the dinner 's through!

And hey! to hear her laughin'!  
And ho! to hear her sing!—  
To have her back is all we lack  
Of havin' *everything*!



CHORUS

*Then it 's whoopt-doopty dooden!—  
Wwhopty-dooden then!  
Oh! it 's whoopt-doopty dooden,  
When Betsy 's back again!*

OUR BETSY

Oh! some may sail the northern lakes,  
And some to foreign lands,  
And some may seek old Nameless Creek,  
Or India's golden sands;

Or some may go to Kokomo,  
And some to Mackinac,—  
But I'll go down to Morgantown  
To fetch our Betsy back.

CHORUS

*Then it's whoopty-doopty dooden!—  
Wwhopty-dooden then!  
Oh! it's whoopty-doopty dooden,  
When Betsy's back again!*

## THE TOY-BALLOON

THEY wuz a Big Day wunst in town,  
An' little Jason's Pa  
Buyed him a little toy-balloon,  
The first he ever saw.—  
An' oh! but Jase wuz *more'n* proud,  
A-holdin' to the string  
An' scrougin' through the grea'-big crowd,  
To hear the Glee Club sing.

The Glee Club it wuz goin' to sing  
In old Masonic Hall;  
An' Speakin', it wuz in there, too,  
An' soldiers, folks an' all:  
An' Jason's Pa he git a seat  
An' set down purty soon,  
A-holdin' little Jase, an' him  
A-holdin' his balloon.

## THE TOY-BALLOON

An' while the Speakin' 's startin' up

An' ever'body still—

The first you know wuz little Jase

A-yellin' fit to kill!—

Nen Jason's Pa jump on his seat

An' grab up in the air,—

But little Jason's toy-balloon

Wuz clean away from there!

An' Jase he yelled; an' Jase's Pa,

Still lookin' up, clumb down—

While that-air little toy-balloon

Went bumpin' roun' an' roun'

Ag'inst the ceilin', 'way up there

Where ever'body saw,

An' *they* all yelled, an' *Jason* yelled,

An' little Jason's Pa!

But when his Pa he packed him out

A-screamin'—nen the crowd

Looked down an' hushed—till they looked up

An' howled again out loud;

THE TOY-BALLOON

An' nen the speaker, mad an' pale,  
Jist turned an' left the stand,  
An' all j'ined in the Glee Club—"Hail,  
Columby, Happy Land!"

## SOME CHRISTMAS YOUNGSTERS

### I

#### THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK

LAST Chris'mus, little Benny  
Wuzn't sick so bad,—  
*Now* he 's had the worst spell  
Ever yet he had.  
Ever' Chris'mus-morning, though,  
He 'll p'tend as if  
He 's asleep—an' first you know  
He 's got your "Chris'mus-gif'!"

Pa he 's good to *all* of us  
*All* the time; but when,  
Ever' time it 's *Chris'mus*,  
He's as good again!—



SOME CHRISTMAS YOUNGSTERS

'Sides our toys an' candy,  
Ever' Chris'mus, he  
Gives us all a quarter,  
Certain as can be!



Pa, this morning, tiptoe' in  
To make the fire, you know,  
Long 'fore it 's daylight,  
An' all 's ice an' snow!—

SOME CHRISTMAS YOUNGSTERS

An' Benny holler, "*Chris'mus-gif'!*"

An' Pa jump an' say,

"You 'll only git a *dollar* if

You skeer me thataway!"



SOME CHRISTMAS YOUNGSTERS

II

THE LITTLE QUESTIONER

BABE she 's so always  
Wantin' more to hear  
All about Santy Claus,  
An' says: "Mommy dear,  
Where 's Santy's *home* at  
When he ain't *away*?—  
An' is they *Mizzus* Santy Claus  
An' *little folks*—say?—  
Chris'mus, Santy 's always *here*—  
Don't *they* want him, too?  
When it *ain't* Chris'mus  
What does he do?"

## SOME CHRISTMAS YOUNGSTERS

### III

#### PARENTAL CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

PARUNTS don't git toys an' things,  
Like you 'd think they *ruther*.—  
Mighty funny Chris'mus-gif's  
Parunts gives each other!—  
Pa give Ma a barrel o' flour.  
An' Ma she give to Pa  
The nicest dinin'-table  
She know he ever saw!



## OLD GRANNY DUSK

OLD Granny Dusk, when the sun goes down,  
Here *she* comes into thish-yer town !  
Out o' the wet black woods an' swamps  
In she traipses an' trails an' tromps—  
With her old sunbonnet all floppy an' brown,  
An' her cluckety shoes, an' her old black gown,  
Here *she* comes into thish-yer town !



## OLD GRANNY DUSK

Old Granny Dusk, when the bats begin  
To flap around, comes a-trompin' in!  
An' the katydids they rasp an' whir,  
An' the lightnin'-bugs all blink at *her*;  
An' the old Hop-toad turns in his thumbs,  
An' the bunglin' June-bug booms an' bums,  
An' the Bullfrog croaks, "O here *she* comes!"

Old Granny Dusk, though I'm 'feard o' you,  
Shore-fer-certain I'm sorry, too:  
'Cause you look as lonesome an' starved an' sad  
As a mother 'at's lost ever' child she had.—  
Yet never a child in thish-yer town  
Clings at yer hand er yer old black gown,  
Er kisses the face you 're a-bendin' down.



## THE YOUNG OLD MAN

VOLUNTARY BY ARTLESS "LITTLE BROTHER"

MAMMA is a widow: there's only us three—  
Our pretty Mamma, little sister, and me:  
And we've come to live in this new neighborhood  
Where all seems so quiet, old-fashioned and good.

Mamma sits and sews at the window, and I—  
I'm out at the gate when an old man goes by—  
Such a *lovely* old man,—though I can't tell you  
why,

Unless it's his greeting,—“Good morning!  
Good morning! good morning!” the old man  
will say,—

“Fine bracing weather we're having to-day!—

THE YOUNG OLD MAN

And how 's little brother—  
And sister—and mother?—  
So dear to each other!—  
Good morning!”

The old man goes by, in his glossy high-hat,  
And stripe-trousers creased, and all turned-up, at  
that,  
And his glancing nose-glasses—and pleasantest  
eyes,  
As he smiles on me, always in newer surprise:  
And though his mustache is as white as the  
snow,  
He wears it waxed out and all pointed, you  
know,  
And gloves, and high collar and bright, jaunty  
bow,  
And stylish umbrella.—“Good morning!



THE YOUNG OLD MAN

Good morning! good morning!" the old man  
will say,—

"Fine falling weather we're promised to-  
day!—

And how 's little brother—

And sister—and mother?—

So fond of each other!—

Good morning!"

. . . . .

It's Christmas!—it's Christmas! and oh, but  
we're gay!

The postman's been here, and Ma says, "Run and  
play:—

You must leave your Mamma to herself for a  
while!"

And so sweet is her voice, and so tender her  
smile!—

And she looks so pretty and happy and—  
Well!—

She 's just too delicious for language to tell!—

THE YOUNG OLD MAN

So Sis hugs her *more*—and *I* answer the bell,—

And there in the doorway—"Good morn-  
ing!—

Good morning! good morning! good morning,  
I say!—

Fine Christmas weather we're having to-  
day!—

And how 's little brother—

Dear sister—er, ruther—

Why, here *is* your *mother*. . . .

Good morning!"

## WHEN UNCLE DOC WAS YOUNG

THOUGH Doctor Glenn—the best of men—  
Is wrinkled, old, and gray,  
He 'll always smile and stop awhile  
Where little children play:



WHEN UNCLE DOC WAS YOUNG

And often then he tells us, when

*He* was a youngster, too,

He was as glad and bad a lad

As old folks ever knew!



As he walks down, no boy in town

But sees him half a block,

And stops to shout a welcome out

With "Here comes Uncle Doc!"

Then all the rest, they look their best

As he lines up among

Us boys of ten—each thinking then

When Uncle Doc was young.

We *run* to him!—Though grave and grim,

With voice pitched high and thin,

He still reveals the joy he feels

In all that *he* has been:





WHEN UNCLE DOC WAS YOUNG

With heart too true, and honest, too,  
To ever *hide* a truth, .  
He frankly owns, in laughing tones,  
He was "a sorry youth!"—



When he was young, he says, he sung  
And howled his level-best ;  
He says he guyed, and sneaked, and lied,  
And wrecked the robin's nest.—

WHEN UNCLE DOC WAS YOUNG

And this, and worse, will he rehearse,  
Then smooth his snowy locks  
And look the saint he says he ain't. . . .  
Them eyes of Uncle Doc's!

He says, when he—like you and me—  
Was just too low and mean  
To slap asleep, he used to weep  
To find his face was clean :  
His hair, he said, was just too red  
To tell with mortal tongue—  
“The Burning Shame” was his nickname  
When Uncle Doc was young.



## BILLY MILLER'S CIRCUS-SHOW

At Billy Miller's Circus-Show—

In their old stable where it's at—

The boys pays twenty pins to go,

An' gits their money's-worth at that!—



'Cause Billy he can climb and chalk

His stockin'-feet an' purt'-nigh walk

A tight-rope—yes, an' ef he fall

He'll ketch, an' "skin a cat"—'at's all!

## BILLY MILLER'S CIRCUS-SHOW

He ain't afeard to swing and hang  
Ist by his legs!—an' mayby stop  
An' yell "Look out!" an' nen—k-spang!—  
He'll let loose, upside-down, an' drop  
Wite on his hands! An' nen he'll do  
"Contortion-acts"—ist limber through  
As "Injarubber Mens" 'at goes  
With shore-fer-certain circus-shows!

### At Billy Miller's Circus-Show

He's got a circus-ring—an' they's  
A dressin'-room,—so's he can go  
An' dress an' paint up when he plays  
He's somepin' else ;—'cause sometimes he's  
"Ringmaster"—bossin' like he please—  
An' sometimes "Ephalunt"—er "Bare-  
Back Rider," prancin' out o' there!

An' sometimes—an' the best of all!—

He's "The Old Clown," an' got on clo'es  
All stripud,—an' white hat, all tall  
An' peakud—like in shore-'nuff shows,—

BILLY MILLER'S CIRCUS-SHOW

An' got three-cornered red-marks, too,  
On his white cheeks—ist like they do!—  
An' you'd ist die, the way he sings  
An' dances an' says funny things!

## THE LAW OF THE PERVERSE

WHERE did the custom come from, anyway?—

Sending the boys to “play,” at dinner-time,  
When we have company? What is there, pray,  
About the starched, unmalleable guest  
That, in the host’s most genial interest,  
Finds *him* first favor on Thanksgiving Day  
Beside the steaming turkey, with its wings  
Akimbo over all the savory things  
It has been stuffed with, yet may never thus  
Make one poor boy’s face glad and glorious!

Fancy the exiled boy in the back-yard,  
Ahungered so that any kind of grub  
Were welcome, yet with face set stern and hard,  
Hearing the feasters’ laugh and mild hubbub,  
And wanting to kill something with a club!—

## THE LAW OF THE PERVERSE

Intuitively arguing the unjust  
Distinction, as he naturally must,—  
The guest with all the opportunity,—  
The boy with all the appetite! Ah, me!

So is it that when I, a luckless guest,  
Am thus arraigned at banquet, I sit grim  
And sullen, eating nothing with a zest,  
With smirking features, yet a soul distressed,  
Missing the banished boy and envying him—  
Aye, longing for a spatter on my vest  
From his deflecting spoon, and yearning for  
The wild swoop of his lips insatiate, or  
His ever-ravenous, marauding eye  
Fore-eating everything from soup to pie!



## CHAIRLEY BURKE

It's Chairley Burke's in town, b'ys! He's down  
til "Jamesy's Place,"

Wid a bran'-new shave upon 'um, an' the fhwhus-  
kers aff his face;

He's quit the Section Gang last night, an' yez can  
chalk it down

There 's goin' to be the divil's toime, sence Chair-  
ley Burke's in town.

It's treatin' iv'ry b'y he is, an' poundin' on the bar  
Till iv'ry man he's drinkin' wid must shmoke a  
foine cigar;

An' Missus Murphy's little Kate, that's comin'  
there for beer,

Can't pay wan cint the bucketful, the whilst that  
Chairley's here!

CHAIRLEY BURKE

He's joompin' oor the tops o' sthools, the both  
forninst an' back!

He'll lave yez pick the blessèd flure, an' walk the  
straightest crack!

He's liftin' barrels wid his teeth, and singin'  
"Garry Owen"

Till all the house be strikin' hands, sence Chairley  
Burke's in town.

The Road-Yaird hands comes dhroppin' in, an'  
never goin' back;

An' there's two freights upon the switch—the  
wan on aither track—

An' Mr. Gearry, from The Shops, he's mad  
enough to swear,

An' durst n't spake a word but grin, the whilst  
that Chairley's there!

Och! Chairley!—Chairley!—Chairley Burke! ye  
divil, wid yer ways

O' dhrivin' all the troubles aff, these dark an'  
gloomy days!

CHAIRLEY BURKE

Ohone! that it's meself, wid all the griefs I have  
to dhrown,  
Must lave me pick to resht a bit, sence Chairley  
Burke's in town!



## SONG—THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

I'm The Old Man of the Sea—I am!—

And this is my secret pride,

That I have a hundred shapes, all sham,

And a hundred names besides :

They have named me "Habit," and "Way," for-  
sooth,

"Capricious," and "Fancy-free";—

But to you, O Youth, I confess the truth,—

I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!*

*So lift up a song with me,*

*As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,*

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea.*

SONG—THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

Crowned with the crown of your noblest thought,  
I'm The Old Man of the Sea:  
I reign, rule, ruin, and palter not  
In my pitiless tyranny:  
You, my lad, are my gay Sinbad,  
Frisking about, with me  
High on the perch I have always had—  
I'm The Old Man of the Sea.



SONG—THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!*

*So lift up a song with me,*

*As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,*

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea.*

Tricked in the guise of your best intent,

I am your failures—all—

I am the victories you invent,

And your high resolves that fall:

I am the vow you are breaking now

As the wassail-bowl swings free

And the red guilt flushes your cheek and brow—

I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!*

*So lift up a song with me,*

*As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,*

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea.*

SONG—THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

I am your false dreams of success  
And your mythical future fame—  
Your life-long lies, and your soul's distress  
And your slowly-dying shame :  
I'm the clattering half of your latest laugh,  
And your tongue's last perfidy—  
Your doom, your tomb, and your epitaph . . .  
I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

*I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!*  
*So lift up a song with me,*  
*As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,*  
*I'm The Old Man of the Sea.*

## AT NINETY IN THE SHADE

Hot weather? Yes; but really not,  
Compared with weather twice as hot.  
Find comfort, then, in arguing thus,  
And you'll pull through victorious!—  
For instance, while you gasp and pant  
And try to cool yourself—and can't—  
With soda, cream and lemonade,  
The heat at ninety in the shade,—  
Just calmly sit and ponder o'er  
These same degrees, with ninety more  
On top of them, and so concede  
The weather now is cool indeed!  
Think—as the perspiration dew  
Your fevered brow, and seems to ooze  
From out the ends of every hair—  
Whole floods of it, with floods to spare—

AT NINETY IN THE SHADE

Think, I repeat, the while the sweat  
Pours down your spine—how hotter yet  
Just ninety *more* degrees would be,  
And bear *this* ninety patiently!  
Think—as you mop your brow and hair,  
With sticky feelings everywhere—  
How ninety more degrees increase



Of heat like this would start the grease ;  
Or, think, as you exhausted stand,  
A wilted "palmleaf" in each hand—  
When the thermometer has done  
With ease the lap of ninety-one ;  
O think, I say, what heat might do  
At one hundred and eighty-two—  
Just twice the heat you now declare,  
Complainingly, is hard to bear.  
Or, as you watch the mercury  
Mount, still elate, one more degree,  
And doff your collar and cravat,  
And rig a sponge up in your hat,  
And ask Tom, Harry, Dick and Jim  
If this is hot enough for him—  
Consider how the sun would pour  
At one hundred and eighty-four—  
Just twice the heat that seems to be  
Affecting you unpleasantly,  
The very hour that you might find  
As cool as dew, were you inclined.

AT NINETY IN THE SHADE

But why proceed when none will heed  
Advice apportioned to the need?  
Hot weather? Yes ; but really not,  
Compared with weather twice as hot !



## GOOD-BYE ER HOWDY-DO

Say good-bye er howdy-do—  
What 's the odds betwixt the two?  
Comin'—goin'—every day—  
Best friends first to go away—  
Grasp of hands you 'd ruther hold  
Than their weight in solid gold,  
Slips their grip while greetin' you.—  
Say good-bye er howdy-do?

Howdy-do, and then, good-bye—  
Mixes jist like laugh and cry;  
Deaths and births, and worst and best,  
Tangled their contrariest;  
Ev'ry jinglin' weddin'-bell  
Skeerin' up some funer'l knell.—  
Here's my song, and there's your sigh.—  
Howdy-do, and then, good-bye!

GOOD-BYE ER HOWDY-DO

Say good-bye er howdy-do—  
Jist the same to me and you ;  
'Taint worth while to make no fuss,  
'Cause the job's put up on us !  
Some One's runnin' this concern  
That's got nothin' else to learn :  
If He's willin', we'll pull through—  
Say good-bye er howdy-do !

A LOCAL POLITICIAN FROM  
AWAY BACK

JEDGE is good at argyin'—  
No mistake in that !  
Most folks 'at tackles *him*  
He'll skin 'em like a cat !  
You see, the Jedge is read up,  
And ben in politics,  
Hand-in-glove, you might say,  
Sense back in '56.

Elected to the Shurrif, first,  
Then elected Clerk ;  
Went into lawin' then,  
And buckled down to work ;

Practiced three or four terms,  
Then he run for jedge—  
Speechified a little 'round,  
And went in like a wedge!

Run fer Legislatur' twic't—  
Made her, ever' pop!  
Keeps on the way 'he's doin',  
Don't know where he'll stop!  
Some thinks he's got his eye  
On the govnership;—  
Well, ef he tuk the track,  
Guess he'd make the trip!

But I started out to tell you—  
(Now I allus liked *the man*—  
Not fer his politics,  
But *social'*, understan'!—  
Fer, 's regards to *my* views,  
Political and sich,—  
When we come together there  
We're purty ap' to hitch.)

Ketched him in at Knox's shop  
On'y t'other day—  
Gittin' shaved, the Jedge was,  
Er somepin' thataway.—  
Well, I tetched him up some  
On the silver bill:—  
Jedge says, "I won't discuss it;"  
*I says, "You will!"*



I-says-ee, "I reckon  
You'll concede with me,  
Coin's the on'y genuine  
Money," I-says-ee;

Says I, "What's a dollar-bill?"

Says I, "What's a ten—

Er forty-leven hunderd of 'em?—

Give us specie, then!"

I seed I was a gittin'

The Jedge kindo' red

Around the gills. He hawked some

And cle'ed his throat and said!—

"Facts is too complicated

'Bout the bill in view,"

Squirmed and told the barber then

He wisht he'd hurry through.

'Ll, then, I knowed I had him,—

And the crowd around the fire

Was all a-winkin' at me,

As the barber raised him higher—

Says I, "Jedge, what's a dollar?—

Er a half-un," I-says-ee—

"What's a *quarter*?—What's a *dime*?"

"What's *cents*?" says he.

W'y I had him fairly b'ilin'!

“You needn't comb my hair,”

He says to the barber—

“I want fresh air;”

And you'd a-died a-laughin'

To a-seed him grab his hat,

As I-says-ee, says I, “Jedge,

Where you goin' at!”

Jedge is good at argyin'

By-and-large; and yit

Beat him at his own game

And he's goin' to git!

And yit the Jedge is read up,

And ben in politics,

Hand-in-glove, you might say,

Sence back in '56.

## NEVER TALK BACK

NEVER talk back! sich things is repperhensible;

A feller only hurts hisse'f that jaws a man  
that's hot;

In a quarrel, ef you'll only keep your mouth shet  
and act sensible,

The man that does the talkin' 'll git worsted  
every shot!

Never talk back to a feller that's abusin' you—

Jest let him carry on, and rip, and snort, and  
swear;

And when he finds his blamin' and defamin' 's  
jest amusin' you,

You've got him clean kaflummixed,—and you  
want to hold him there!



## NEVER TALK BACK

Never talk back, and wake up the whole community

And call a man a liar, over Law, er Politics.—  
You can lift and land him furdur and with grace-  
fuller impunity

With one good jolt of silence than half a dozen  
kicks!



## “A BRAVE REFRAIN”

WHEN snow is here, and the trees look weird,  
And the knuckled twigs are gloved with frost ;  
When the breath congeals in the drover's beard,  
And the old pathway to the barn is lost ;  
When the rooster's crow is sad to hear,  
And the stamp of the stabled horse is vain,  
And the tone of the cow-bell grieves the ear—  
O then is the time for a brave refrain !

When the gears hang stiff on the harness-peg,  
And the tallow gleams in frozen streaks ;  
And the old hen stands on a lonesome leg,  
And the pump sounds hoarse and the handle  
squeaks ;

“A BRAVE REFRAIN”

When the woodpile lies in a shrouded heap,  
And the frost is scratched from the window-  
pane,  
And anxious eyes from the inside peep—  
O then is the time for a brave refrain!



When the ax-helve warms at the chimney-jamb!  
And hob-nailed shoes on the hearth below,  
And the house-cat curls in a slumber calm,  
And the eight-day clock ticks loud and slow;

“A BRAVE REFRAIN”

When the harsh broom-handle jabs the ceil  
    'Neath the kitchen-loft, and the drowsy brain  
Sniffs the breath of the morning meal—  
    O then is the time for a brave refrain!

ENVOI.

When the skillet seethes, and a-blubbering hot  
Tilts the lid of the coffee-pot,  
And the scent of the buckwheat cake grows  
    plain—  
O then is the time for a brave refrain!

## ME AND MARY

ALL my feelin's in the Spring

Gits so blame contrary,

I can't think of anything

Only me and Mary!

"Me and Mary!" all the time,

"Me and Mary!" like a rhyme,

Keeps a-dingin' on till I'm

Sick o' "Me and Mary!"

"Me and Mary! Ef us two

Only was together—

Playin' like we used to do

In the Aprile weather!"

All the night and all the day

I keep wishin' thataway

Till I'm gittin' old and gray

Jes on "Me and Mary!"

Muddy yit along the pike  
    Sence the Winter's freezin',  
And the orchard's back'ard-like  
    Bloomin' out this season;  
Only heerd one bluebird yit—  
Nary robin ner tomtit;  
What's the how and why of it?  
    'Spect it's "Me and Mary!"

Me and Mary liked the birds—  
    That is, *Mary* sorto'  
Liked 'em first, and afterwards,  
    W'y, I thought *I'd* ort'o.  
And them birds—ef Mary stood  
Right here with me, like she should—  
They'd be singin', them birds would,  
    All fer me and Mary.

Birds er not, I'm hopin' some  
    I can git to plowin'!  
Ef the sun'll only come,  
    And the Lord allowin',

ME AND MARY

Guess to-morry I'll turn in  
And git down to work ag'in;  
This here loaferin' won't win,  
Not fer me and Mary!

Fer a man that loves like me,  
And's afeard to name it,  
Till some other feller, he  
Gits the girl—dad-shame-it!  
Wet er dry, er clouds er sun—  
Winter gone er jes begun—  
Outdoor work fer me er none,  
No more "Me and Mary!"

## FIRE AT NIGHT

FIRE! Fire! Ring! and ring!  
Hear the old bell bang and ding!  
Fire! Fire! 'way at night,—  
Can't you hear?—I think you might!—



Can't you hear them-air clangin' bells?—  
W'y, *I* can't hear nothin' else!  
Fire! Ain't you 'wake at last!—  
Hear them horses poundin' past—



## FIRE AT NIGHT

Hear that ladder-wagon grind  
Round the corner!—and, behind,  
Hear the hose-cart, turnin' short,  
And the horses slip and snort,  
As the engine's clank-and-jar  
Jolts the whole street, near and far.  
Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!  
Can't you hist that winder higher?  
La! they've all got past like "scat!"  
Night's as black as my old hat—  
And it's rainin', too, at that! . . .  
Wonder where their old fire's at!

## A FALL CRICK VIEW OF THE EARTHQUAKE

I kin hump my back and take the rain,  
And I don't keer how she pours ;  
I kin keep kindo' ca'm in a thunder-storm,  
No matter how loud she roars ;  
I hain't much skeered o' the lightnin'  
Ner I hain't sich awful shakes  
Afeard o' *cyclones*—but I don't want none  
O' yer dad-burned old earthquakes !

As long as my legs keeps stiddy,  
And long as my head keeps plum',  
And the buildin' stays in the front lot,  
I still kin whistle, *some!*

## A FALL CRICK VIEW OF THE EARTHQUAKE

But about the time the old clock  
Flops off'n the mantel-shelf,  
And the bureau skoots fer the kitchen,  
I'm a-goin' to skoot, myself!



Plague-take! ef you keep me stabled  
While any earthquakes is around!—  
I'm jist like the stock,—I'll beller  
And break fer the open ground!

A FALL CRICK VIEW OF THE EARTHQUAKE

And I 'low you'd be as nervous,  
And in jist about my fix,  
When yer whole farm slides from inunder you,  
And on'y the mor'gage sticks!

Now cars hain't a-goin' to kill you  
Ef you don't drive 'crost the track;  
Crediters never'll jerk you up  
Ef you go and pay 'em back;  
You kin stand all moral and mundane storms  
Ef you'll on'y jist behave—  
But a' EARTHQUAKE:—well, ef it wanted you  
It 'ud husk you out o' yer grave!

## MR. SILBERBERG

### AND LITTLE JULIUS

I LIKE me yet dot leedle chile  
Vich climb my lap up in to-day,  
Unt took my cheap cigair away,  
Unt laugh and kiss me purty-whvile,—



Possescially I like dose mout'

Vich taste his moder's like—unt so,  
Eef my cigair it gone clean out  
—Yust let it go!

Vat I caire den for anyding?

Der "HERALDT" schlip out fon my handt  
Unt all my odvairtizement standt  
Mitout new changements boddering;  
I only t'ink—I have me dis  
Von leedle boy tq pet unt love  
Unt play me vit, unt hug unt kiss—  
Unt dot's enough!

Der plans unt pairposes I vear .

Out in der vorld all fades away,  
Unt vit der beeznis of der day  
I got me den no time to spare;  
Der caires of trade vas caires no more—  
Dem cash accounts dey dodge me by,  
Unt vit my chile I roll der floor,  
Unt laugh unt gry!

Ach! frient! dem childens is der ones  
 Dot got some happy times—you bet!—  
 Dot 's vy ven I been growed up yet  
 I visht I shtill been leedle vonce!  
 Unt ven dot leedle roozter tries  
 Dem baby-tricks I used to do,  
 My mout it vater, unt my eyes  
 Dey vater too!

Unt all der summertime unt spring  
 Of childhood it come back to me,  
 So dot it vas a dream I see  
 Ven I yust look at anyding!  
 Unt ven dot leedle boy run by,  
 I dink "Dot's me," fon hour to hour  
 Schtill chasing yet dose butterfly  
 Fon flower to flower!

Oxpore I vas lots money vairt,  
 Mit blenty schtone-front schtore to rent,  
 Unt mor'gages at twelf per tcent.,  
 Unt diamonds in my ruffled shairt,—

MR. SILBERBERG

I make a'signment of all dot,  
Unt tairn it over mit a schmile  
Aber you please—but, don'd forgot,  
I keep dot chile!



## SPIRITS AT HOME

### THE FAMILY

THERE was Father, and Mother, and Emmy, and  
Jane,

And Lou, and Ellen, and John and me—  
And father was killed in the war, and Lou  
She died of consumption, and John did too,  
And Emmy she went with the pleurisy.

### THE SPIRITS

Father believed in 'em all his life—

But Mother, at first, she'd shake her head—  
Till after the battle of Champion Hill,  
When many a flag in the winder-sill  
Had crape mixed in with the white and red!

SPIRITS AT HOME

I used to doubt 'em myself till then—

But me and Mother was satisfied  
When Ellen she set, and Father came  
And rapped "God Bless You!" and Mother's  
name,  
And "The flag's up here!" And we just all  
cried.

Used to come often, after that,

And talk to us—just as he used to do,  
Pleasantest kind! And once, for John,  
He said he was "lonesome but wouldn't let on—  
Fear mother would worry, and Emmy and  
Lou."

But Lou was the bravest girl on earth—

For all she never was hale and strong,  
She'd have her fun!—With her voice clean lost  
She'd laugh and joke us that "when *she* crossed  
To Father, *we'd* all come taggin' along!"

Died—just that way! And the raps was thick

*That* night, as they often since occur,

Extry loud! And when *Lou* got back

She said it was Father and her—and “whack!”

She tuck the table—and we knowed *her*!

John and Emmy, in five years more,

Both had went.—And it seemed like fate!—

For the old home *it* burnt down,—but Jane

And me and Ellen we built again

The new house, here, on the old estate.

And a happier family I don't know

Of anywheres—unless it's *them*,—

Father, with all his love for Lou,

And her there with him, and healthy, too,

And laughin', with John and little Em.

SPIRITS AT HOME

And, first we moved in the new house here,  
They all dropped in for a long pow-wow,  
“We like your buildin’, of course,” Lou said,—  
“But wouldn’t swop with you to save your head—  
For *we* live in the ghost of the old house now!”

## A HINT OF SPRING

'Twas but a hint of Spring—for still  
The atmosphere was sharp and chill,  
Save where the genial sunshine smote  
The shoulders of my overcoat,  
And o'er the snow beneath my feet  
Laid spectral fences down the street.

My shadow even seemed to be  
Elate with some new buoyancy,  
And bowed and bobbed in my advance  
With trippingest extravagance,  
And, when the birds chirpt out somewhere,  
It seemed to wheel with me and stare.

Above I heard a rasping stir—  
And on the roof the carpenter

## A HINT OF SPRING

Was perched, and prodding rusty leaves  
From out the choked and dripping eaves—  
And some one, hammering about,  
Was taking all the windows out.



Old scraps of shingles fell before  
The noisy mansion's open door ;  
And wrangling children raked the yard,  
And labored much, and laughed as hard,  
And fired the burning trash I smelt  
And sniffed again—so good I felt !

## LOCKERBIE FAIR

O THE LOCKERBIE FAIR!—Have you heard of its  
fame

And its fabulous riches, too rare for a name!—  
The gold of the noon of the June-time refined  
To the Orient-Night, till the eyes and the mind  
Are dazed with the sights, in the earth and the  
air,  
Of the opulent splendors of Lockerbie Fair.

What more fortunate fate might to mortal befall,  
Midst the midsummer beauty and bloom of it all,  
Than to beam with the moon o'er the rapturous  
scene

And twink with the stars as they laughingly lean  
O'er the luminous revel and glamour and glare  
Fused in one dazzling glory at Lockerbie Fair.

## LOCKERBIE FAIR

The Night, like a queen in her purple and lace,  
With her diamonded brow, and imperious grace  
As she leads her fair votaries, train upon train,  
A-dance thro' the feasts of this mystic domain  
To the mandolin's twang, and the warble and  
    blare  
Of voice, flute and bugle at Lockerbie Fair.

All strange, ever-changing, enchanted delights  
Found now in this newer Arabian Nights,—  
Where each lovely maid is a Princess, and each  
Lucky swain an Aladdin—all treasures in reach  
Of the lamps and the rings—and with Genii to  
    spare,  
Simply waiting your orders, at Lockerbie Fair.



## A TINKLE OF BELLS

THE LIGHT of the moon on the white of the  
snow,

And the answering twinkles along the street,  
And our sleigh flashing by, in the glamour and  
glow

Of the glorious nights of the long ago,

When the laugh of her lips rang clear and sweet  
As the tinkle our horses shook out of the bells

And flung and tossed back

On our glittering track

In a shower of tremulous, murmuring swells

Of the echoing, airy, melodious bells!—

O the mirth of the bells!

And the worth of the bells!

Come tinkle again, in this dearth of the bells,—  
This laughter and love that I lack, yearning back,  
For the far-away sound of the bells!

A TINKLE OF BELLS

Ah! the bells, they were glad in the long ago!  
And the tinkles they had, they have thrilled me so  
I have said: "It is they and her songs and face  
Make summer for me in the wintriest place!"

And now—but sobbings and sad farewells,  
As I peer in the night through the sleeted pane,  
Hearing a clangor and wrangle of bells,  
And never a tinkle again!

The snow is a-swoon, and the moon dead-white,  
And the frost is wild in the air to-night!  
Yet still will I linger and listen and pray  
Till the sound of her voice shall come this way,  
With a tinkle of bells,  
And the lisp-like tread  
Of the hooves of the sleigh,  
And the murmurs and swells  
Of the vows she said.  
And O, I shall listen as madmen may,  
Till the tinkling bells ring down this way!—

## A TINKLE OF BELLS

Till again the grasp of my hand entwines  
The tensioned loops of the quivering lines,  
And again we ride in the wake of the pride  
And the strength of the coursers, side by side ;  
With our faces smitten again by the spray  
Of the froth of our streets as we gallop away

    In affright of the bells,  
And the infinite glee and delight of the bells,  
As they tinkle and tinkle and tinkle, till they  
Are heard through a dawn where the mists are  
        drawn,

And we canter a gallop and dash away  
    Sheer into The Judgment Day !



## AN OLD FRIEND

HEY, Old Midsummer! are you here again,  
With all your harvest-store of olden joys,—  
Vast overhanging meadow-lands of rain,



AN OLD FRIEND

And drowsy dawns, and noons when golden grain  
Nods in the sun, and lazy truant boys  
Drift ever listlessly adown the day,  
Too full of joy to rest, and dreams to play.



The same old Summer, with the same old smile  
Beaming upon us in the same old way

AN OLD FRIEND

We knew in childhood! Though a weary while  
Since that far time, yet memories reconcile

The heart with odorous breaths of clover-  
hay;

And again I hear the doves, and the sun streams  
through

The old barn-door just as it used to do.

And so it seems like welcoming a friend—

An old, *old* friend, upon his coming home  
From some far country—coming home to spend  
Long, loitering days with me: And I extend  
My hand in rapturous glee:—And so you've  
come!—

Ho, I'm so glad! Come in and take a chair:

Well, this is just like *old* times, I declare!

## MY BACHELOR CHUM

O a corpulent man is my bachelor chum,  
With a neck apoplectic and thick—  
An abdomen on him as big as a drum,  
And a fist big enough for the stick;  
With a walk that for grace is clear out of the case,  
And a wobble uncertain—as though  
His little bow-legs had forgotten the pace  
That in youth used to favor him so.

He is forty, at least; and the top of his head  
Is a bald and a glittering thing;  
And his nose and his two chubby cheeks are as  
red  
As three rival roses in Spring.

MY BACHELOR CHUM

His mouth is a grin with the corners tucked in,  
And his laugh is so breezy and bright  
That it ripples his features and dimples his chin  
With a billowy look of delight.

He is fond of declaring he "don't care a straw"—  
That "the ills of a bachelor's life  
Are blisses compared with a mother-in-law,  
And a boarding-school miss for a wife!"  
So he smokes and he drinks, and he jokes and he  
winks,  
And he dines and he wines, all alone,  
With a thumb ever ready to snap as he thinks  
Of the comforts he never has known.

But up in his den—(Ah, my bachelor chum!)—  
I have sat with him there in the gloom,  
When the laugh of his lips died away to become  
But a phantom of mirth in the room.



## MY BACHELOR CHUM

And to look on him there you would love him,  
for all

His ridiculous ways, and be dumb  
As the little girl-face that smiles down from the  
wall

On the tears of my bachelor chum.



## HER BEAUTIFUL HANDS

O YOUR HANDS—they are strangely fair !  
Fair—for the jewels that sparkle there,—  
Fair—for the witchery of the spell  
That ivory keys alone can tell ;  
But when their delicate touches rest  
Here in my own do I love them best,  
As I clasp with eager, acquisitive spans  
My glorious treasure of beautiful hands !

Marvelous—wonderful—beautiful hands !  
They can coax roses to bloom in the strands  
Of your brown tresses ; and ribbons will twine,  
Under mysterious touches of thine,  
Into such knots as entangle the soul  
And fetter the heart under such a control  
As only the strength of my love understands—  
My passionate love for your beautiful hands.

## HER BEAUTIFUL HANDS

As I remember the first fair touch  
Of those beautiful hands that I love so much,  
I seem to thrill as I then was thrilled,  
Kissing the glove that I found unfilled—  
When I met your gaze, and the queenly bow,  
As you said to me, laughingly, "Keep it  
now!" . . .  
And dazed and alone in a dream I stand,  
Kissing this ghost of your beautiful hand.

When first I loved, in the long ago,  
And held your hand as I told you so—  
Pressed and caressed it and gave it a kiss  
And said "I could die for a hand like this!"  
Little I dreamed love's fullness yet  
Had to ripen when eyes were wet  
And prayers were vain in their wild demands  
For one warm touch of your beautiful hands.

## HER BEAUTIFUL HANDS

Beautiful Hands!—O Beautiful Hands!  
Could you reach out of the alien lands  
Where you are lingering, and give me, to-night,  
Only a touch—were it ever so light—  
My heart were soothed, and my weary brain  
Would lull itself into rest again;  
For there is no solace the world commands  
Like the caress of your beautiful hands.

## THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH

I QUARREL not with Destiny,  
But make the best of everything—  
The best is good enough for me.

Leave Discontent alone, and she  
Will shut her mouth and let *you* sing.  
I quarrel not with Destiny.

I take some things, or let 'em be—  
Good gold has always got the ring ;  
The best is good enough for me.

Since Fate insists on secrecy,  
I have no arguments to bring—  
I quarrel not with Destiny.

THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH

The fellow that goes "haw" for "gee"  
Will find he hasn't got full swing.  
The best is good enough for me.

ONE only knows our needs, and He  
Does all of the distributing.  
I quarrel not with Destiny;  
The best is good enough for me.



## TOIL

HE had toiled away for a weary while,  
Thro' day's dull glare and the night's deep gloom ;  
And many a long and lonesome mile  
He had paced in the round of his dismal room ;  
He had fared on hunger—had drank of pain  
As the drouthy earth might drink of rain ;  
And the brow he leaned in his trembling palm  
Throbbled with a misery so intense  
That never again did it seem that calm  
Might come to him with the gracious balm  
Of old-time languor and indolence.  
And he said, "I will leave the tale half told,  
And leave the song for the winds to sing ;  
And the pen—that pitiless blade of gold  
That stabs my heart like a dagger-sting—  
I will drive to the hilt through the inkstand's top  
And spill its blood to the last black drop !"

## TOIL

Then he masked his voice with a laugh, and went  
Out in the world with a lawless grace—  
With a brazen lie in his eyes and face  
Told in a smile of glad content:  
He roved the rounds of pleasure through,  
And tasted each as it pleased him to;  
He joined old songs, and the clink and din  
Of the revelers at the banquet hall;  
And he tripped his feet where the violin  
Spun its waltz for the carnival;  
He looked, bedazed, on the luring wile  
And the siren-light of a woman's smile,  
And peered in her eyes as a diver might  
Peer in the sea ere he leaps from sight,—  
Caught his breath, with a glance above,  
And dropped full-length in the depths of love.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Tis well if ever the false lights die  
On the alien coasts where our wreck'd hopes lie!  
'Tis well to feel, through the blinding rain,  
Our outflung hands touch earth again!



## TOIL

So the castaway came, safe from doom,  
Back at last to his lonely room  
Filled with its treasure of work to do  
And radiant with the light and bloom  
Of the summer sun and his glad soul, too!  
And sweet as ever the song of birds,  
Over his work he sang these words:—

“O friends are good, with their princely ways,  
And royal hearts they are goodly things;  
And fellowship, in the long dark days  
When the drear soul cowers with drooping wings,  
Is a thing to yearn for.—*Mirth* is good,—  
For a ringing laugh is a rhythmic cry  
Blown like a hail from the Angelhood  
To the barque of the lone soul drifting by.—  
Goodly, too, is the mute caress  
Of woman’s hands and their tenderness—  
The warm breath wet with the dews of love—  
The vine-like arms, and the fruit thereof—  
The touch that thrills, and the kiss that melts,—  
But Toil is sweeter than all things else.”

## HIS ROOM

"I'M home again, my dear old Room,  
I'm home again, and happy, too,  
As, peering through the brightening gloom,  
I find myself alone with you :  
Though brief my stay, nor far away,  
I missed you—missed you night and day—  
As wildly yearned for you as now.—  
Old Room, how are you, anyhow ?

"My easy chair, with open arms,  
Awaits me just within the door ;  
The littered carpet's woven charms  
Have never seemed so bright before,—  
The old rosettes and mignonettes  
And ivy-leaves and violets,  
Look up as pure and fresh of hue  
As though baptized in morning dew.





## HIS ROOM

“Old Room, to me your homely walls  
Fold round me like the arms of love,  
And over all my being falls  
A blessing pure as from above—  
Even as a nestling child caressed  
And lulled upon a loving breast,  
With folded eyes, too glad to weep  
And yet too sad for dreams or sleep.

“You’ve been so kind to me, old Room—  
So patient in your tender care,  
My drooping heart in fullest bloom  
Has blossomed for you unaware;  
And who but you had cared to woo  
A heart so dark, and heavy too,  
As in the past you lifted mine  
From out the shadow to the shine?

“For I was but a wayward boy  
When first you gladly welcomed me  
And taught me work was truer joy  
Than rioting incessantly:

## HIS ROOM

And thus the din that stormed within  
The old guitar and violin  
Has fallen in a fainter tone  
And sweeter, for your sake alone.

“Though in my absence I have stood  
In festal halls a favored guest,  
I missed, in this old quietude,  
My worthy work and worthy rest—  
By *this* I know that long ago  
You loved me first, and told me so  
In art’s mute eloquence of speech  
The voice of praise may never reach.

“For lips and eyes in truth’s disguise  
Confuse the faces of my friends,  
Till old affection’s fondest ties  
I find unraveling at the ends;  
But as I turn to you, and learn  
To meet my griefs with less concern,  
Your love seems all I have to keep  
Me smiling lest I needs must weep.

## HIS ROOM

“Yet I am happy, and would fain  
Forget the world and all its woes;  
So set me to my tasks again,  
Old Room, and lull me to repose:  
And as we glide adown the tide  
Of dreams, forever side by side,  
I’ll hold your hands as lovers do  
Their sweethearts’ and talk love to you.”

## THE PATHS OF PEACE

MAURICE THOMPSON—FEBRUARY 14, 1901

He would have holiday—outworn, in sooth,  
    Would turn again to seek the old release,—  
The open fields—the loved haunts of his youth—  
    The woods, the waters, and the paths of peace.

The rest—the recreation he would choose  
    Be his abidingly! Long has he served  
And greatly—ay, and greatly let us use  
    Our grief, and yield him nobly as deserved.

Perchance—with subtler senses than our own  
    And love exceeding ours—he listens thus  
To ever nearer, clearer pipings blown  
    From out the lost lands of Theocritus.



## THE PATHS OF PEACE

Or, haply, he is beckoned from us here,  
By knight or yeoman of the bosky wood,  
Or, chained in roses, haled a prisoner  
Before the blithe Immortal, Robin Hood.

Or, mayhap, Chaucer signals, and with him  
And his rare fellows he goes pilgriming;  
Or Walton signs him, o'er the morning brim  
Of misty waters midst the dales of Spring.

Ho! wheresoe'r he goes, or whosoe'er  
He fares with, he has bravely earned the boon.  
Be his the open, and the glory there  
Of April-buds, May-blooms and flowers of  
June!

Be his the glittering dawn, the twinkling dew,  
The breathless pool or gush of laughing  
streams—

Be his the triumph of the coming true  
Of all his loveliest dreams!

## IN STATE

Is it the martins or katydids?—

Early morning or late at night?

A dream, belike, kneeling down on the lids

Of a dying man's eyesight.

. . . . .

Over and over I heard the rain—

Over and over I waked to see

The blaze of the lamp as again and again

Its stare insulted me.

. . . . .

It is not the click of the clock I hear—

It is the *pulse* of the clock,—and lo!

How it throbs and throbs on the quickened ear

Of the dead man listening so!

IN STATE

I heard them whisper She would not come ;  
But, being dead, I knew—I knew !  
Some hearts they love us alive, and some  
They love us dead—they do !

And I am dead—and I joy to be,—  
For here are my folded hands, so cold  
And yet blood-warm with the roses she  
Has given me to hold.

Dead—yea, dead !—But I hear the beat  
Of her heart as her warm lips touch my brow—  
And O how sweet—how blinding sweet  
To know that she loves me *now* !

## THE MUTE SINGER

### I

THE morning sun seemed fair as though  
It were a great red rose ablow  
    In lavish bloom,  
With all the air for its perfume,—  
    Yet he who had been wont to sing,  
    Could trill no thing.

### II

Supine, at noon, as he looked up  
Into the vast inverted cup  
    Of heavenly gold,  
Brimmed with its marvels manifold,  
And his eye kindled, and his cheek—  
    Song could not speak.

THE MUTE SINGER

III

Night fell forebodingly ; he knew  
Soon must the rain be falling, too,—  
    And, home, heartsore,  
A missive met him at the door—  
    —Then Song lit on his lips, and he  
    Sang gloriously.

## THE TRIBUTE OF HIS HOME

BENJAMIN HARRISON, INDIANAPOLIS,  
MARCH 14, 1901

BOWED, midst a universal grief that makes  
Columbia's self a stricken mourner, cast  
In tears beneath the old Flag at half-mast,  
A sense of glory rouses us and breaks  
Like song upon our sorrowing and shakes  
The dew from our drenched eyes, that smile  
at last  
In childish pride—as though the great man  
passed  
To his most high reward for our poor sakes.

THE TRIBUTE OF HIS HOME

Loved of all men—we muse,—yet ours he was—  
Choice of the Nation's mighty brotherhood—  
Her soldier, statesman, ruler.—Ay, but then,  
We knew him—long before the world's applause  
And after—as a neighbor, kind and good,  
Our common friend and fellow-citizen.

EDGAR WILSON NYE

OBIT FEBRUARY 22, 1896

THE saddest silence falls when Laughter lays  
Finger on lip, and falteringly breaks  
The glad voice into dying minor shakes  
And quavers, lorn as airs the wind-harp plays  
At wane of drearest Winter's bleakest days.  
A troubled hush, in which all hope forsakes  
Us, and the yearning upstrained vision aches  
With tears that drown e'en heaven from our gaze.  
Such silence—after such glad merriment!  
O prince of halest humor, wit and cheer!  
Could you speak yet to us, I doubt not we  
Should catch your voice, still blithely eloquent  
Above all murmurings of sorrow here,  
Calling your love back to us laughingly.



## SONGS OF A LIFE-TIME

MRS. SARAH T. BOLTON'S POEMS

1897

SONGS of a Life-Time—with the Singer's head  
A silvery glory shining midst the green  
Of laurel-leaves that bind a brow serene  
And godlike as was ever garlanded.—  
So seems *her* glory who herein has wed  
Melodious Beauty to the strong of mien  
And kingly Speech—made kinglier by this queen  
In liliated cadence voiced and raimented.  
Songs of a Life-Time: by your own sweet stress  
Of singing were ye loved of bygone years—  
As through our day ye are, and shall be hence,  
Till *fame divine* marks your melodiousness  
And on the Singer's lips, with smiles and tears,  
Seals there the kiss of love and reverence.

## A NOON INTERVAL

A DEEP, delicious hush in earth and sky—

A gracious lull—since, from its wakening,

The morn has been a feverish, restless thing  
In which the pulse of Summer ran too high  
And riotous, as though its heart went nigh

To bursting with delights past uttering:

Now, as an o'erjoyed child may cease to sing  
All falteringly at play, with drowsy eye

Draining the pictures of a fairy-tale  
To brim his dreams with—there comes o'er the  
day

A loathful silence, wherein all sounds fail  
Like loitering tones of some faint roundelay . . .

No wakeful effort longer may avail—  
The wand waves, and the dozer sinks away.

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

HEIGH-o! our jolly tilts at New World song!—  
What was the poem indeed! and where the  
bard—

“Stabbing his inkpot ever, not his heart,”  
As Hector phrased it contumeliously,  
Mouthing and munching, at the orchard-stile,  
A water-cored rambo whose spirted juice  
Glanced, sprayed and flecked the sunlight as he  
mouth'd

And muncht, and muncht and mouth'd. All loved  
the man!

“Our Hector” as his *Alma Mater* oozed  
It into utterance—“Old Hec” said we  
Who knew him, hide-and-tallow, hoof-and-horn'  
So he: “O ay! my soul! our New World song—  
The tweedle-deedles of our modern school—

A school of minnows,—not one gamy bass—  
 To hook the angler, not the angler him.  
 Here! all ye little fishes: tweedle-dee!  
 Soh! one—along the vasty stream of time—  
 Glints to the surface with a gasp,—and, lo,  
 A bubble! and he thinks, 'My eye!—see there,  
 Ye little fishes,—there's a song I've sung!  
 Another gapes: another bubble; then  
 He thinks: 'Well, is it not a wondrous art  
 To breathe a great immortal poem like that!  
 And then another—and another still—  
 And yet another,—till from brim to brim  
 The tide is postuled over with a pest  
 Of bubbles—bursting bubbles! Ay! O ay!"  
 So, bluff old Hec. And we, who knew his mood  
 Had ramped its worst—unless we roused it yet  
 To ire's horrifficest insanity  
 By some inane, unguarded reference  
 To "verse beragged in Hoosier dialect"—  
 (A strangely unforgotten coinage of  
 Old Hec's long years ago)—we, so, forbore

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

A word, each glimpsing each, as down we sank,  
Couched limply in the orchard's selvage, where—  
The rambo finished and the soggy core  
Zippt at a sapphire wasp with waist more slim  
Than any slender lady's, of old wars,  
Pent fasting for long sennights in tall towers  
That overtop the undercringing seas—  
With one accordant voice, the while he creased  
His scroll of manuscript, we said, "Go on."  
Then Hector thus:

## AN IDYLL OF THE KING

Erewhile, at Autumn, to King Arthur's court  
Came Raelus, clamoring: "Lo, has our house  
Been sacked and pillaged by a lawless band  
Of robber knaves, led on by Alstanés,  
The Night-Flower named, because of her fair  
face,  
All like a lily gleaming in the dusk

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Of her dark hair—and like a lily brimmed  
With dewy eyes that drip their limpid smiles  
Like poison out, for by them has been wro't  
My elder brother's doom, as much I fear.  
While three days gone was holden harvest-feast



At Lynion Castle—clinging like a gull  
High up the gray cliffs of Caerleon—  
Came, leaf-like lifted from the plain below  
As by a twisted wind, a rustling pack

Of bandit pillagers, with Alstanés  
 Bright-fluttering like a red leaf in the front.  
 And ere we were aware of fell intent—  
 Not knowing whether it was friend or foe—  
 We found us in their toils, and all the house  
 In place of guests held only prisoners—  
 Save that the host, my brother, wro't upon  
 By the strange beauty of the robber queen,  
 Was left unfettered, but by silken threads  
 Of fine-spun flatteries and wanton smiles  
 Of the enchantress, till her villain thieves  
 Had rifled as they willed and signal given  
 To get to horse again. And so they went—  
 Their leader flinging backward, as she rode,  
 A kiss to my mad brother—mad since then,—  
 For from that sorry hour he but talked  
 Of Alstanés, and her rare beauty, and  
 Her purity—ay, even that he said  
 Was star-white, and should light his life with  
     love  
 Or leave him groping blindly in its quest

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Thro' all eternity. So, sighing, he  
Went wandering about till set of sun,  
Then got to horse, and bade us all farewell;  
And with his glaucous eyes bent trancedly



Upon the tumbled sands that marked the way  
The robber-woman went, he turned and chased  
His long black shadow o'er the edge of night."—  
So Raelus, all seemingly befret



With such concern as nipped his utterance  
 In scraps of speech: at which Sir Lancelot,  
 Lifting a slow smile to the King, and then  
 Turning his cool eye on the youth—"And you  
 Would track this siren-robber to her hold  
 And rout her rascal followers, and free  
 Your brother from the meshes of this queen  
 Of hearts—for there you doubtless think him?"

"Ay!"

Foamed Raelus, cheek flushed and eye aflame,—  
 "So even have I tracked, and found them, too,  
 And know their burrow, shrouded in a copse,  
 Where, faring in my brother's quest, I heard  
 The nicker of his horse, and followed on,  
 And found him tethered in a thicket wild,  
 As tangled in its tress of leaf and limb  
 As is a madman's hair; and down the path  
 That parted it and ran across a knoll  
 And dipped again, all suddenly I came  
 Upon a cave, wide-yawning 'neath a beard  
 Of tangled moss and vine, whence issuing

I heard, blown o'er my senses faint and clear  
 As whiffs of summer wind, my brother's voice  
 Liltng a love-song, with the burden tricked  
 With dainty warblings of a woman's tongue:  
 And even as I listening bent, I heard  
 Such peals of wanton merriment as made  
 My own heart flutter as a bird that beats  
 For freedom at the bars that prison it.  
 So turned I then and fled as one who flies  
 To save himself alone—forgetful of all  
 Of that my dearer self—my brother.—O!"—  
 Breaking as sharply as the icy blade  
 That loosens from the eave to slice the air  
 And splinter into scales of flying frost—  
 "Thy help! Thy help! A dozen goodly knights—  
 Ay, even that, if so it be their hearts  
 Are hungry as my own to right the wrong!"

So Raelus. And Arthur graciously  
 Gave ear to him, and, patient, heard him thro',  
 And pitied him, and granted all he asked;

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Then took his hand and held it, saying, "Strong  
And ever stronger may its grasp be knit  
About the sword that flashes in the cause  
Of good."

Thus Raelus, on the morrow's front,  
Trapped like a knight and shining like a star,  
Pranced from the archway of the court, and led



## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

His glittering lances down the gleaming road  
That river-like ran winding till it slipped  
Out of the palace view and spilled their shields  
Like twinkling bubbles o'er the mountain brim.  
Then happed it that as Raelus rode, his tongue  
Kept even pace and cantered ever on  
Right merrily. His brother, as he said,  
Had such an idle soul within his breast—  
Such shallowness of fancy for his heart  
To drift about in—that he well believed  
Its anchor would lay hold on any smile  
The lees of womanhood might offer him.  
As for himself, he loved his brother well,  
Yet had far liefer see him stark and white  
In marble death than that his veins shuld burn  
With such vitality as spent its flame  
So garishly it knew no steady blaze,  
But ever wavered round as veered the wind  
Of his conceit ; for he had made his boast—  
Tho' to his own shame did he speak of it—  
That with a wink he could buy every smile

That virtue owned. So tattled Raelus  
Till, heated with his theme, he lifted voice  
And sang the song, "The Light of Woman's  
Eyes!"

*"O bright is gleaming morn on mountain height;  
And bright the moon, slipt from its sheath of  
night,—  
But brighter is the light of woman's eyes.*

*"And bright the dewdrop, trembling on the lip  
Of some red rose, or lily petal-tip,  
Or lash of pink,—but brighter woman's eyes.*

*"Bright is the firefly's ever-drifting spark  
That throbs its pulse of light out in the dark;  
And bright the stars,—but brighter woman's  
eyes.*

*"Bright morn or even; bright or moon or star,  
And all the many twinkling lights that are,—  
O brighter than ye all are woman's eyes."*

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

So Raelus sang.—And they who rode with him  
Bewildered were, and even as he sang  
Went straggling, twos and threes, and fell behind  
To whisper wonderingly, “Is he a fool?”  
And “Does he waver in his mind?” and “Does  
The newness of adventure dazzle him?”  
So spake they each to each, till far beyond,  
With but one loathful knight in company,  
They saw him quit the beaten track, and turn  
Into the grassy margin of a wood.  
And loitering, they fell in mocking jest  
Of their strange leader! “See! why, see!” said  
one,—  
“He needs no help to fight his hornets’ nest,  
But one brave knight to squire him!”—pointing  
on  
To where fared on the two and disappeared.  
“O ay!” said one, “belike he is some old  
War-battered knight of long-forgotten age,  
That, bursting from his chrysalis, the grave,  
Comes back to show us tricks we never dreamed!”

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

“Or haply,” said another, with a laugh,—  
“He rides ahead to tell them that he comes  
And shrive them ere his courage catches up.”  
And merry made they all, and each in turn  
Filliped a witty pellet at his head:  
Until, at last, their shadows shrunk away  
And shortened 'neath them and the hour was  
noon.

They flung them from their horses listlessly  
Within the grassy margin of the wood  
Where had passed Raclus an hour ago:  
And, hungered, spied a rustic; and they sent  
To have them such refreshment as might be  
Found at the nearest farm,—where, as it chanced,  
Was had most wholesome meat, and milk, and  
bread;

And honey, too, celled in its fretted vase  
Of gummy gold and dripping nectar-sweet  
As dreamed-of kisses from the lips of love;  
Wine, too, was broughten, rosy as the dawn  
That ushers in the morning of the heart;

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

And tawny, mellow pear, whose golden ore  
Fell molten on the tongue and oozed away  
In creamy and delicious nothingness ;  
And netted melon, musky as the breath  
Of breezes blown from out the Orient ;  
And purple clusterings of plum and grape,  
Blurred with a dust dissolving at the touch,  
Like flakes the fairies had snowed over them.  
And as the idlers basked, with toast and song  
And graceful dalliance and wanton jest,  
A sound of trampling hooves and jingling reins  
Brake sudden, stilled them ; and from out a dim  
Path leading from the bosky wood there came  
A troop of mounted damsels, nigh a score,  
Led by a queenly girl, in crimson clad,  
With lissome figure lithe and willowy,  
And face as fair and sweet and pure withal  
As might a maiden lily-blossom be  
Ere it has learned the sin of perfect bloom :  
Her hair, blown backward like a silken scarf  
And fondled by the sun, was glossier



## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

And bluer black than any raven's wing.

"And O!" she laughed, not knowing she was  
heard

By any but her fellows: "Men are fools!"

Then drawing rein, and wheeling suddenly,

Her charger mincing backward,—“Raelus—

My Raelus is greater than ye all,

Since he is such a fool that he forgets

He is a man, and lets his tongue of love

Run babbling like a silly child's; and, pah!

I puff him to the winds like thistle-down!"

And, wheeling as she spake, found staring up,

Wide-eyed and wondering, a group of knights,

Half lifted, as their elbows propped their heads,

Half lying; and one, smirker than the rest,

Stood bowing very low, with upturned eyes

Lit with a twinkling smile: "Fair lady—and

Most gracious gentlewoman"—seeing that

The others drew them back as tho' abashed

And veiled their faces with all modesty,

Tho' she, their leader, showed not any qualm,—

"Since all unwittingly we overheard  
 Your latest speech, and since we know at last  
 'All men are fools,' right glad indeed am I  
 That such a nest of us remains for you  
 To vanquish with those eyes." Then, serious,  
 That she nor smiled nor winced, nor anything—  
 "Your pardon will be to me as a shower  
 Of gracious rain unto a panting drouth."  
 So bowed in humblest reverence; at which  
 The damsel, turning to her followers,  
 Laughed musically,—“See! he proves my  
                   words!”

Whereat the others joined with inward glee  
 Her pealing mirth; and in the merriment  
 The knights chimed, too, and he, the vanquished  
                   one,  
 Till all the wood rang as at hunting-tide  
 When bugle-rumors float about the air  
 And echoes leap and revel in delight.

Then spake the vanquished knight, with mental  
eye

Sweeping the vantage-ground that chance had  
gained,—

“Your further pardon, lady. Since the name  
Of Raelus fell from those lips of thine,  
We fain would know of him. He led us here,  
And as he went the way wherefrom your path  
Emerges, haply you may tell us where  
He may be found?”

“What! Raelus?” she cried,—  
“He comes with you?—The brave Sir Raelus?—  
That mighty champion?—that gallant knight?—  
That peerless wonder of all nobleness?  
Then proud am I to greet ye, knowing that;  
And, certes, had I known of it ere now,  
Then had I proffered you more courtesy  
And told you, ere the asking, that he bides  
The coming of his friends a league from this,

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Hard by a reedy mere, where in high tune  
We left him singing, nigh an hour ago."  
Then, as she lightly wheeled her horse about  
And signal gave to her companions  
To follow, gaily cried: "Tell Raelus  
His cousin sends to him her sad farewells  
And fond regrets, and kisses many as  
His valorous deeds are numbered in her heart."  
And with "Fair morrow to ye, gentle knights!"  
Her steed's hooves struck the highway at a  
bound;

And dimly thro' the dust they saw her lead  
Her fluttering cavalcade as recklessly  
As might a queen of Araby, fleet-horsed,  
Skim o'er the level sands of Syria;  
So vanished. And the knights with one accord  
Put foot in stirrup, and, with puzzled minds  
And many-channeled marvelings, filed in  
The woody path, and fared them on and on  
Thro' denser glooms, and ways more intricate;

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Till, mystified at last and wholly lost,  
They made full halt, and would have turned them  
back

But that a sudden voice brake on their ears  
All piteous and wailing, as distressed :  
And, following these cries, they sharply came  
Upon an open road that circled round  
A reedy flat and sodden tract of sedge,  
Moated with stagnant water, crusted thick  
With slimy moss, wherein were wriggling things  
Entangled, and blind bubbles bulging up  
And bursting where from middle way upshot  
A tree-trunk, with its gnarled and warty hands  
As tho' upheld to clutch at sliding snakes  
Or nip the wet wings of the dragon-fly.  
Here gazing, lo ! they saw their comrade, he  
That had gone on with Raelus ; and he  
Was tugging to fling back into its place  
A heavy log that once had spanned the pool

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

And made a footway to the sedgy flat  
Whence came the bitter wailing cries they heard.



Then hastened they to join him in his task ;  
But, panting, as they asked of Raelus,  
All winded with his work, yet jollier  
Than meadow-lark at morn, he sent his voice  
In such a twittering of merriment,  
The wail of sorrow died and laughter strewed  
Its grave with melody.

“O Raelus!

Rare Raelus!” he cried and clapped his hands,  
 And even in the weeds that edged the pool  
 Fell wrestling with his mirth.—“Why, Raelus,”  
 He said, when he at last could speak again,  
 “Drew magnet-like—you know that talk of his,—  
 And so, adhesive, did I cling and cling  
 Until I found us in your far advance,  
 And, hidden in the wood, I stayed to say  
 ’Twas better we should bide your coming. ‘No.’  
 Then on again; and still a second time—  
 ‘Shall we not bide their coming?’ ‘No!’ he said;  
 And on again, until the third; and ‘No—  
 We’ll push a little further.’ As we did;  
 And, sudden, came upon an open glade—  
 There to the northward,—by a thicket bound:  
 Then he dismounted, giving me his rein,  
 And, charging me to keep myself concealed,  
 And if he were not back a certain time  
 To ride for you and search where he had gone,  
 He crossed the opening and passed from sight

OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Within the thicket. I was curious :  
And so, dismounting, tethered our two steeds  
And followed him ; and, creeping warily,  
Came on him where—unseen of him—I saw  
Him pause before the cave himself described  
Before us yesternoon. And here he put  
His fingers to his lips and gave a call  
Bird-like and quavering : at which a face,  
As radiant as summer sun at morn,  
Parted the viny curtains of the cave ;  
And then, a moment later, came in view  
A woman even fairer than my sight  
Might understand. ‘What ! dare you come  
again ?’

As, lifting up her eyes all flashingly,  
She scorched him with a look of hate.—‘Begone !  
Or have you—traitor, villain, knave, and cur,—  
Bro’t minions of the law to carry out  
The vengeance of your whimpering jealousy ?’  
Then Raelus, all cowering before  
Her queenly anger, faltered : ‘Hear me yet ;



## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

I do not threaten. But your love—love!—  
O give me that. I know you pure as dew :  
Your love ! Your love !—The smile that has gone  
out

And left my soul a midnight of despair !—  
Your love or life ! For I have even now  
Your stronghold girt about with certain doom  
If you but waver in your choice.—Your love !'  
At which, as quick as tho't, leapt on him there  
A strong man from the covert of the gloom ;  
And others, like to him, from here and there  
Came scurrying. I, turning, would have fled,  
But found myself as suddenly beset  
And tied and tumbled there with Raelus.  
And him they haltered by his squirming heels  
Until he did confess such villainy  
As made me wonder if his wits were sound—  
Confessed himself a renegade—a thief—  
Ay, even one of them, save that he knew  
Not that nice honor even thieves may claim  
Among themselves.—And so ran on thro' such

OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

A catalogue of littlenesses, I  
For deafest shame had even stopped my ears  
But that my wrists were lockt. And when he  
came  
To his confession of his lie at court,  
By which was gained our knightly sympathy  
And valiant service on this fools' crusade,  
I seemed to feel the redness of my blush  
Soak thro' my very soul. There I brake in :  
'Fair lady and most gallant,—to my shame  
Do I admit we have been duped by such  
An ingrate as this bundled lump of flesh  
That I am helpless to rise up and spurn :  
Unbind me, and I promise such amends  
As knightly hands may deign to wreak upon  
A thing so vile as he.' Then, laughing, she :  
'First tell me, by your honor, where await  
Your knightly brothers and my enemies.'  
To which I answered, truthfully, I knew  
Not where you lingered, but not close at hand  
I was assured. Then all abrupt, she turned :

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

'Get every one within ! We ride at once !'  
And scarce a dozen minutes ere they came  
Outpouring from the cave in such a guise  
As made me smile from very wonderment.—  
From head to heel in woman's dress they came,  
Clad richly, too, and trapped and tricked withal  
As maidenly, but in the face and hand,  
As ever damsels flock at holiday.  
Then were their chargers bro't, caparisoned  
In keeping ; and they mounted, lifting us,  
Still bounden, with much jest and mockery  
Of soft caress and wanton blandishments,  
As tho' they were of sex their dress declared.  
And so they carried us until they came  
Upon the road there as it nicks the copse ;  
And so drew rein, dismounted, leaving some  
To guard their horses ; hurried us across  
This footway to the middle of the flat.  
Here Raelus was bounden to a tree,  
Stript to the waist ; my fetters cut, and then  
A long, keen switch put in my hand, and 'Strike !

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Strike as all duty bids you !' said the queen.  
And so I did, with right good will at first ;  
Till, softened as I heard the wretch's prayers  
Of anguish, I at last withheld my hand.



'What ! tiring?' chirpt the queen : 'Give me the  
stick !'

And swish, and swish, and mercy how it rained !

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Then all the others, forming circlewise,  
Danced round and round the howling wretch, and  
          jeered  
And japed at him, and mocked and scoffed at  
          him,  
And spat upon him. And I turned away  
And hid my face; then raised it pleadingly:  
Nor would they listen my appeal for him;  
But left him so, and thonged and took me back  
Across the mere, and drew the bridge, that none  
Might go to him, and carried me with them  
Far on their way, and freed me once again;  
And back I turned, tho' loath, to succor him."  
And even as he ceased they heard the wail  
Break out anew, and crossed without a word,  
And Raelus they found, and without word  
They loosed him. And he brake away and ran  
As runs a lie the truth is hard upon.

OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

Thus did it fare with Raelus. And they  
Who knew of it said naught at court of it,  
Nor from that day spake ever of him once,  
Nor heard of him again, nor cared to hear.

## UNLESS

Who has not wanted does not guess  
What plenty is.—Who has not groped  
In depths of doubt and hopelessness  
Has never truly hoped.—

Unless, sometimes, a shadow falls  
Upon his mirth, and veils his sight,  
And from the darkness drifts the light  
Of love at intervals.

And that most dear of everything,  
I hold, is love ; and who can sit  
With lightest heart, and laugh and sing,  
Knows not the worth of it.—  
Unless, in some strange throng, perchance,  
He feels how thrilling sweet it is,  
One yearning look that answers his—  
The troth of glance and glance.

UNLESS

Who knows not pain, knows not, alas!

What pleasure is.—Who knows not of  
The bitter cup that will not pass,  
· Knows not the taste of love.

O souls that thirst, and hearts that fast,  
And natures faint with famishing,  
God lift and lead and safely bring  
You to your own at last!



## PROSE OR VERSE?

PROSE or Verse—or Verse or Prose?  
Ever thus the query goes,—  
Which delight do we prefer—  
Which the finer—daintier?

Each incites a zest that grows—  
Prose or Verse—or Verse or Prose?—  
Each a lotus-eater's spell  
Wholly irresistible.

All that wit may fashion, free-  
Voiced, or piped in melody,—  
Prose or Verse—or Verse or Prose—  
Which of these the mastery knows?

'Twere as wise to question, friend—  
As of this alluring blend,—  
The aroma or the rose?—  
Prose or Verse—or Verse or Prose?

“GO READ YOUR BOOK!”

How many times that grim old phrase  
Has silenced me, in childish days!

And *now*—as then it did—  
The phantom admonition, clear  
And dominant, rings,—and I hear,  
And do as I am bid.

“Go read your book!” my good old sire  
Commanded, in affected ire,

When I, with querying look  
And speech, dared vex his studious mind  
With idle words of any kind.—

And so I read my book.

Though seldom, in that *wisest* age,  
Did I discern on Wisdom’s page  
More than the *task*: that led

“GO READ YOUR BOOK!”

At least to *thinking*, and at last  
To reading less, and not so fast,  
And longing as I read.

And, lo! in gracious time, I grew  
To love a book all through and through!—  
With yearning eyes I look  
On any volume,—old, maybe,  
Or new—’tis meat and drink to me.—  
And so I read my book.

Old dog-eared Readers, scarred and inked  
With school-boy hatred, long extinct;—  
Old Histories that bored  
Me worst of all the school;—old, worn  
Arithmetics, frayed, ripped, and torn—  
Now Ye are all adored!

And likewise I revere and praise  
My sire, as now, with vainest gaze  
And hearing, still I look

“GO READ YOUR BOOK !”

For the old face so grave yet dear—  
Nay, still I *see*, and still I *hear*!  
And so I read my book.

Next even to my nearest kin,—  
My wife—my children romping in  
From school to ride my knee,—  
I love a book, and dispossess  
My lap of it with loathfulness,  
For all their love of me.

For, grave or gay the book, it takes  
Me as an equal—calms, or makes  
Me, laughing, overlook  
My little self—forgetful all  
Of being so exceeding small.  
And so I read my book.





